

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2012

REPORT OF: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, RUSSELL PEARSON



SUBJECT: ISLE OF WIGHT 999 FIRE AND RESCUE CALL TAKING AND MOBILISING

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

The Cabinet approved in principle the merger of the emergency mobilising controls of the Isle of Wight (IOW) Fire and Rescue Service and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on 21 June 2011. Authority was delegated to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, in discussion with Strategic Director Customers and Communities and the Deputy Leader, to agree the terms of an agreement with the Isle of Wight Fire Authority under which SFRS will provide a 999 fire and rescue call taking and mobilising service to the Isle of Wight. Since then the Member for Community Safety, Director Customers and Communities and the Chief Fire Officer have worked toward the technical, legal, HR, financial and operational solutions involved in merging both mobilising controls at SFRS facility in Reigate.

The decision in the IOW has been delegated to their Chief Fire Officer who can agree and sign the agreement having satisfied himself that the cut over; scheduled for 4 March 2012, presents minimum risk and meets all of the expectations of the original business case.

This paper sets out the main terms of the agreement with the IOW for which approval is sought. A copy of the agreement will be circulated separately as **Annex A** following the completion of final negotiations with IOW.

DETAILS:

Business Case

1. The business case and project plan set out in the Cabinet paper of 21 June 2011 was approved and the work since has followed the schedule set out therein. This merger is dependent on a number of elements being in place: technical solutions, operational ways of working, the merging human resources plus the legal, financial and contractual arrangements being agreed.
2. Technical solutions: SFRS has led this piece of project work for both Services, technical solutions have now been put in place and tested satisfactorily. As described in the business case there has been much ground breaking innovation already. These include upgrading the Rappel system that alerts and shows availability of the retained element of the services both on IOW and in Surrey, greater resilience has been achieved in the area of joint fallback, multi line provision to the site at Reigate, better operator displays, gazetteer management for two separate authorities, National Incident

Reporting System merger, are all new and have been tested. More could follow on the back of the funding from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which this merger is expected to attract (£1.9 million), an announcement is imminent. The technical innovation undertaken so far and the further huge leap expected over the next year if the DCLG funding is approved will provide capacity for future growth should other services wish to join this arrangement. When fully developed (2013) the new Surrey Joint Emergency Communications Centre (JECC) will be the most advanced, secure and efficient mobilising centre in the country.

3. Operational ways of working: SFRS has led this work for both Services; this endeavour will result in the first truly joint and seamless way of mobilising two Fire and Rescue Services using the national incident type attribution process. This will assign the most appropriate fire engines, equipment, specialist vehicles, and appropriately competent fire and rescue personnel to incidents which will lead faster incident resolution. Eventually this will also lead to regional harmonisation with the possibility of front line savings as services begin to act identically adopting the same procedures when attending incidents together or in each others areas of responsibility. Under this proposal operational performance is reported daily, monthly and a quarterly joint board is convened to discuss all elements of the agreement.
4. Merging human resources: SCC has led the TUPE process for both authorities. This process has now been completed in the IOW with the result that three members of the IOW mobilising team will be joining Surrey. During the period since approval was given in June 2011, consultation has also taken place with Surrey staff on shift patterns and ways of working to get the service into the right shape for both authorities. During this period a number of our staff have either left or sought other jobs within the service, this, together with vacancies already existing, has created the capacity to absorb the IOW staff expected to transfer. Consequently no redundancies for Surrey or newly TUPE'd staff are expected but any resultant redundancy costs will be met by the IOW.
5. The creation of an Operations Room in the mobilising centre as part of the operational command reform process has allowed technical solutions to be tested in the mobilising centre. In addition, training for both Surrey and IOW staff has taken place using the new equipment. The effect of this has been to speed up the installation of new equipment and the preparation of our staff.

Financial and value for money implications

6. One of the drivers for the project was to take advantage of the economies of scale that would be available from merging the control rooms of SFRS and the IOW. For Surrey this would mean generating a contribution to what are essentially the fixed costs of running a control room with sufficient spare capacity to deal with peak demand.
7. The approach to identifying a price for the services to be provided to the IOW has been to identify the total cost of control room operations and agree a fair and equitable basis on which these can be shared.
8. As part of the project an exercise was undertaken to identify the full costs of the control room including, in addition to the costs of the control room staff themselves, IT and communications costs, technical support provided within

SFRS and appropriate corporate overheads. The full cost of the control room was estimated as £1,631,000 per annum.

9. The costing exercise was conducted on a prudent basis to ensure all costs are fully reflected. Most of these costs are either fixed or fairly predictable although an estimate of additional variable costs has been included. This is to cover additional activity that is likely to arise as a result of the need to provide out of hours support at more sites and additional travel costs.
10. In addition to shared costs there are specific costs that Surrey will incur solely as a result of providing services for IOW. These amount to £22,000 per annum and principally relate to the requirement for a dedicated communications line between SFRS and IOW.
11. Agreement has been sought on an equitable basis to share costs. The negotiations resulted in an agreed annual cost to the IOW of £260,000 in the first full year to be inflated by 4% per annum thereafter. The gross and net income to SFRS is as set out in the table below:

	Gross Income £000	Net Income £000
2011/12	22	22
2012/13	260	208
2013/14	270	217
2014/15	281	228
2015/16	292	238
2016/17	304	249
TOTAL	1,429	1,162

12. It is anticipated that Surrey will incur some additional specific and variable costs in order to provide the service to IOW, as described above, which accounts for the lower net income shown above. However, this position may improve if these additional variable costs prove to be less than anticipated. This achieves a gross income of £1.429m and estimated net income of £1.162m over the 5 year term of the agreement.
13. Income from the joint arrangement with IOW will contribute to the achievement of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for SFRS. The Fire Public Value Review identified a saving of £144,000 per annum to be achieved by decreasing the number of staff in the communications centre. The joint operation with the IOW achieves this efficiency through a shared service and will also contribute towards the additional call handling income target of £150,000 per annum.

Governance

14. As this is a new partnership both the operational and financial arrangements will be reviewed annually. The reviews will include an assessment of the actual costs incurred; call volumes, the effect on workloads and variable costs as well as the appropriateness of the cost sharing methodology in the light of experience. The outcome of any reviews will be reflected in the agreement under the change control procedure.

Legal implications/legislative requirements

15. This arrangement is authorised under section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This provision allows a fire authority to enter in arrangements to have its statutory obligations under sections 7 – 9 and 11 of the act carried out by another fire authority and notified to the Secretary of State.
16. This is an innovative project, which requires a joint partnering agreement between SCC and the IOW, addressing all the relevant legal aspects including pricing structure, TUPE obligations, liabilities and legal powers which are dealt with in detail in the agreement (Annex A to be circulated separately).
17. The Chief Fire Officer has sought advice from the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, the Fire and Resilience Director at DCLG together with Secretary of State on this matter; they are in full support of this initiative being undertaken under a section 16 arrangement of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.

Equalities implication

18. An Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted as part of the PSP process, this agreement is an element of this therefore the impact in the community will be continually monitored along with other PSP recommendations as they are implemented.

Risk management implications

19. IOW and SFRS conducted a thorough joint risk, assessment, from this it was clear that there would be no impact on Surrey as its mobilising standard would be unaffected. The risks identified in the June paper have been managed and mitigated
20. Risk related issues, including both financial and non-financial risks of the report's proposals are covered above.

Implications for the Council's Community Strategy priorities

21. The Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan includes a priority to improve learning, health and employment outcomes for children and young people, particularly for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Additionally as all County Councillors are corporate parents, reports must consider and set out any impact upon/implications for Looked after Children. This course of action will have no detrimental effect on the Council's Community Strategic priorities.

Climate change/carbon emissions implications

22. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.
23. This proposal would see the reduction of the carbon footprint for Isle of Wight with no impact in Surrey

Corporate Parenting/Looked after Children implications

24. These proposals will have no impact on the Council's corporate parenting role or looked after children.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

25. A commentary from the Section 151 Officer (Head of Finance) clarifying that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered/addressed will be provided once the final agreement is available.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that approval is given to agree and execute the terms of the partnering agreement with the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (Annex A to be circulated separately).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This proposal allows both services to achieve the most valuable elements of the original DCLG FireControl project aims: improving efficiency, enhancing technology and building resilience. This decision is based on principles of localism and is not an imposed solution as opposed to Regional Control Centre. It provides a better operational solution for both services and gives Surrey the ability to sustain and improve its mobilising and communications systems post the DCLG FireControl project and is expected to attract £1.9m funding from DCLG, in time for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games, furthermore providing a platform for future expansion.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

Following the decision the IOW will be notified of the decision and the merger will be able to take place on 4 March 2012, the Secretary of State will be notified and give formal approval for the section 16 arrangement to take place. Cut over will take place on 4 March 2012 in accordance with the 'one foot on the ground at all times' principle agreed with the IOW.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Internal:

Strategic Director Customers and Communities, Communities Select Committee, Public Value Review Member Reference Group, Leader and Public Value Review Steering Board, Fire Brigades Union (Surrey), Deputy Leader, SFRS personnel

External:

Isle of Wight FRS, Isle of Wight full Cabinet, Isle of Wight residents, Fire Brigades Union (IOW)

Informed:

CLT and Communities Select Committee

Sources/background papers:

SFRS Public Value Review report, SFRS Public Safety Plan, SFRS C2 paper, DCLG consultation to cancellation of regional control centres. IOW outline business case, IOW full business case.
